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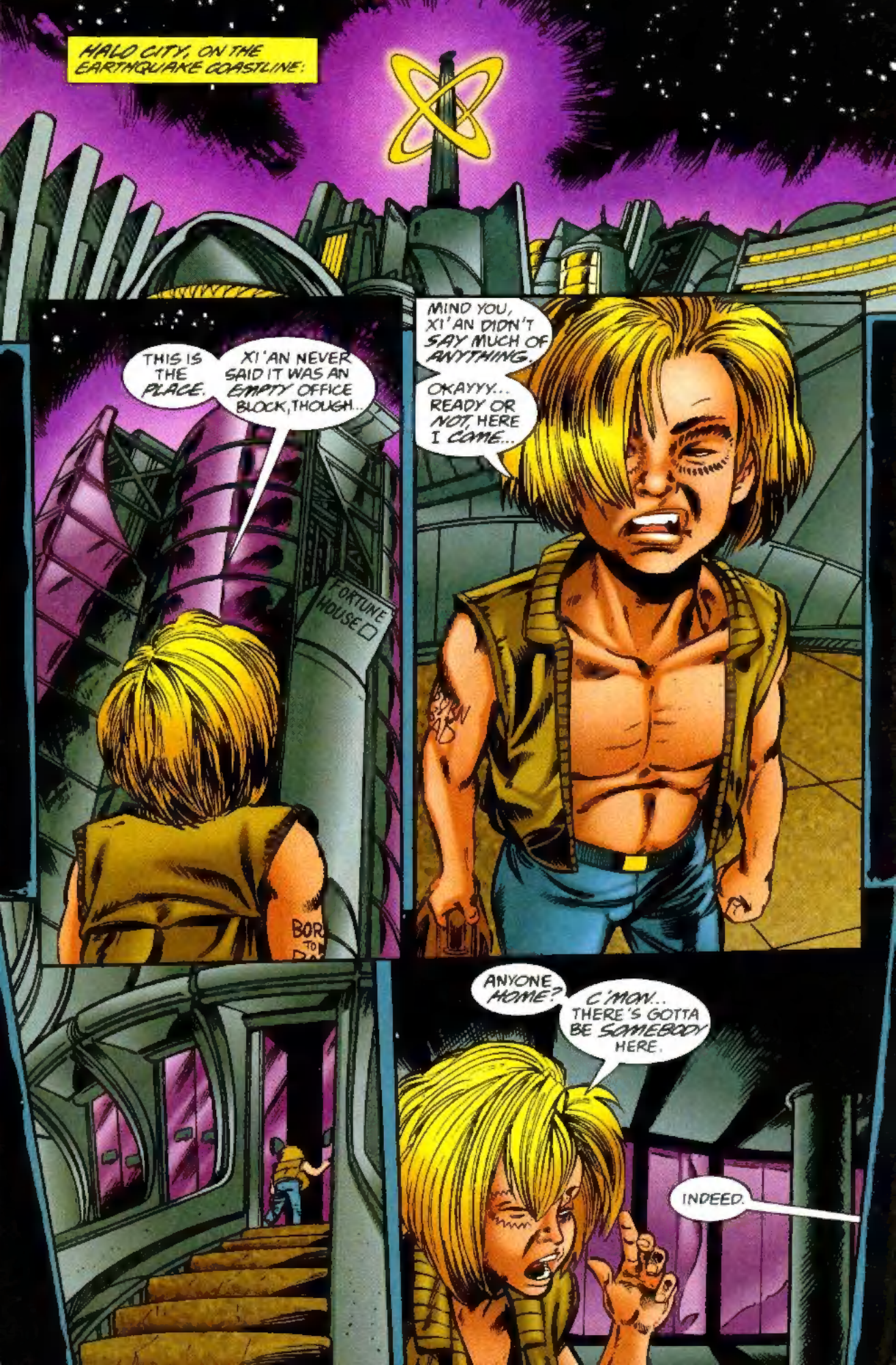
WASHINGTON: UPON THE SITE OF THE WHITE HOUSE, THE RED HOUSE...
...AND, WITHIN ITS OVAL OFFICE, THE PRESIDENT.
SO THIS GRAVE-ROBBER CREATES ZOMBIES?
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE SENDING A STRIKE-FORCE INTO HALO CITY TO GRAB SOME VOODOO GUY, HEROD.
YOU'RE KIDDING ME.
I COULD GENERATE A WORKFORCE FROM THAT VOODOO GUY THAT'D NEVER NEED TO EAT OR SLEEP.
HIGH PROFIT, PRESIDENT ROGERS. COULD SLICE TWO YEARS OFF MY FIVE-YEAR PLAN.
AND, THAT REPTILE MORPHINE SOMERS IS SO DESPERATE TO PURCHASE IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION--
-- THAT HE INTENDS TO HAND ME THE X-MEN TOO.
BLESS HIS SCALES.

I BEGIN TO EQUATE THIS DOOM THING WITH THE ELVIS SIGHTINGS OF YOUR ERA.
I ASSUME ALL THIS HYSTERIA WAS BORN OF THE RAVINGS OF A DYING COP. NO MORE. NO ONE ELSE SAW HIM.
URP
WHAT ABOUT DOOM? I READ OVER SOME OF THE SHIELD REPORTS...
SNORT
HEESO HE'S DEAD, THEN. VAPORIZED HEE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WHITE HEE HOUSE.
TIME TO HEEGET TO BUSINESS -- COMPLETE THE HEEEXTERMINATION OF THE SUPER HEROES --
-- RUN THE HEE-MUTANTS INTO HEE HALO CITY AND OUT HEE OF THE HEEWAY --
SNORT
ATTABOY.

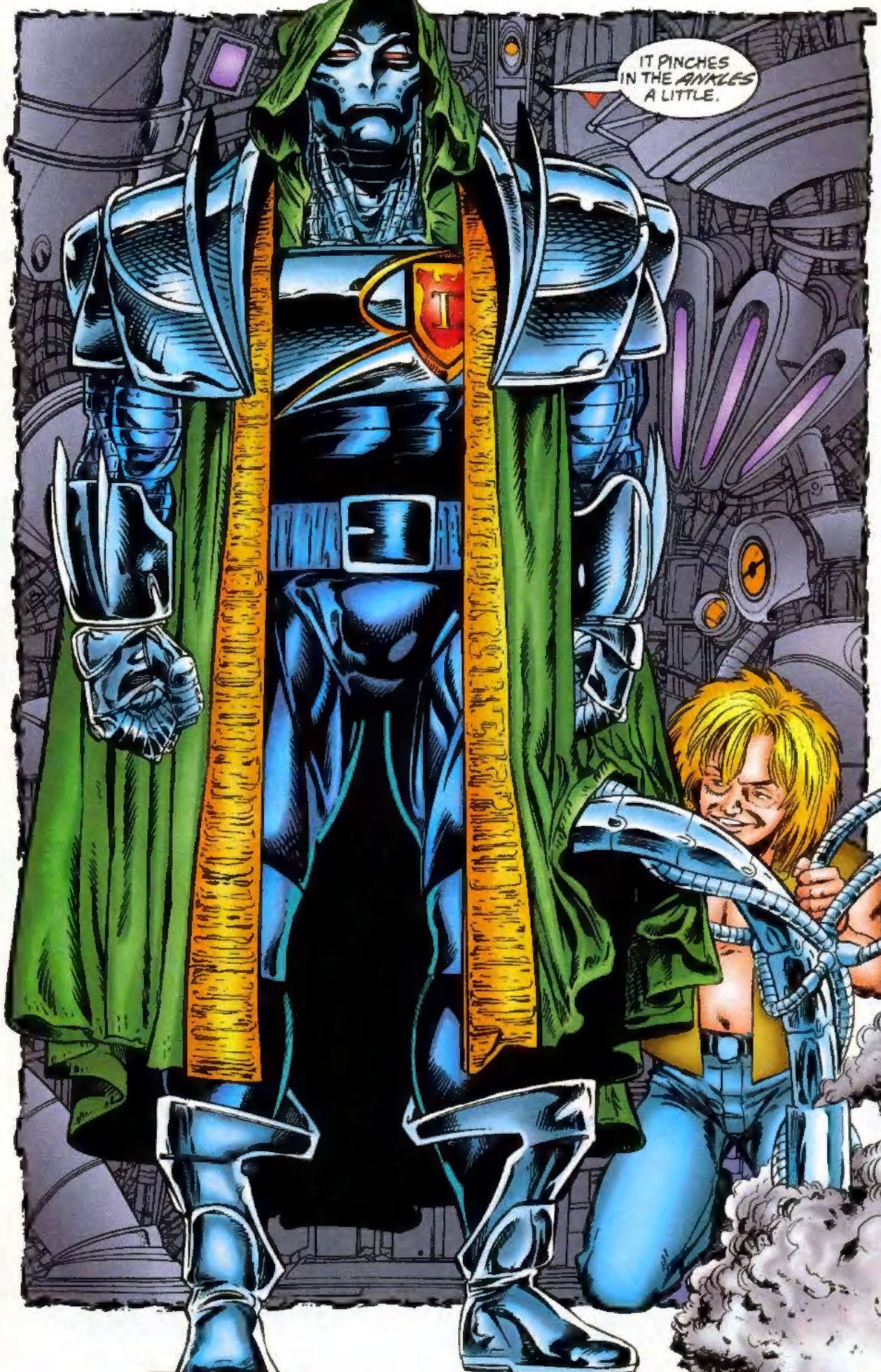

HALO CITY, ON THE EARTHQUAKE COASTLINE:
THIS IS THE PLACE.
XI'AN NEVER SAID IT WAS AN EMPTY OFFICE BLOCK, THOUGH...
FORTUNE HOUSE
MIND YOU, XI'AN DIDN'T SAY MUCH OF ANYTHING.
OKAYYY... READY OR NOT, HERE I COME...
ANYONE HOME?
C'MON... THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMEBODY HERE.
INDEED.

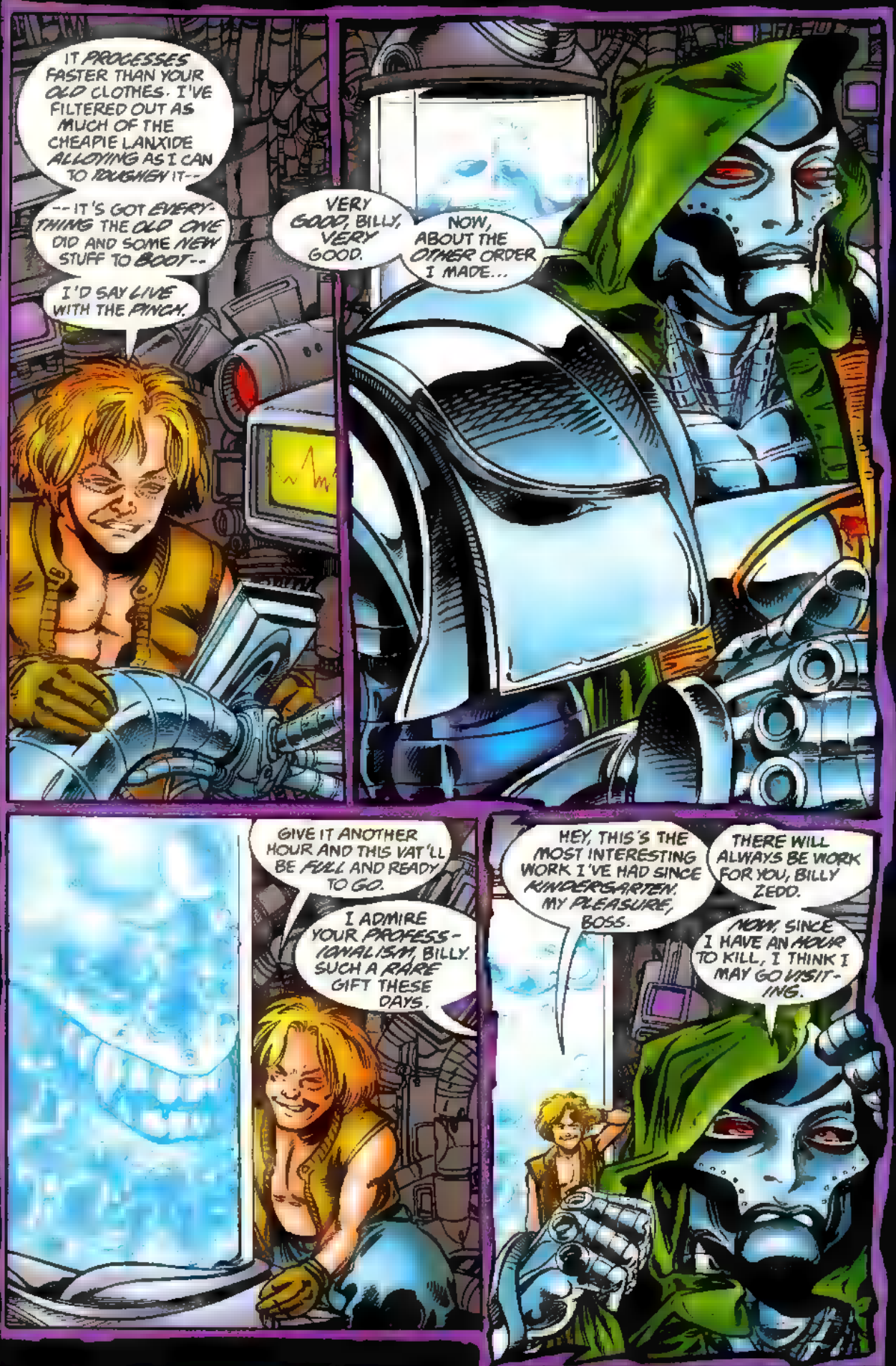
THERE IS SOMEONE HERE.
DOOM?
BUT YOU DIED DURING THE COUNTER-COUP, THE WHITE HOUSE ATTACK--
I REQUEST YOUR SERVICES, BILLY ZEDD. YOUR MUTANT ATTRIBUTE OF MAKING MACHINERY.
I NEED NEW ARMOR. AND I REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL OF NANOTECHNOLOGY.
AND, UNLESS YOU GRANT YOUR SERVICES -- HALO CITY WILL BE DESTROYED.

YOU BETTER HAVE PLENTY OF MATERIAL I CAN CANNIBALIZE-- AND NANOTECH IS GONNA TAKE SOME TIME--
--WHERE YOU GOING?
TIME, BOY, IS SOMETHING I HAVE LACKED EVER SINCE I CAME TO THIS CONTINENT.
BUT THAT WILL BE RECTIFIED, OH, YES.
KEEP UP, BOY.
I PRESUME THAT THIS WILL BE ENOUGH MATERIAL FOR YOUR TALENT TO COME TO GRIPS WITH.
OH, YEAH.
GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO THE SPECS YOU WANT YOUR ARMOR TO HOLD?
THE ATTRIBUTES OF THIS ARMOR, WHEN WORKING, SHOULD SUFFICE. THE DETAILS ARE IN ONBOARD FILES.
OTHER THAN THAT... I GRANT PERMISSION FOR YOU TO BE CREATIVE.
SMOOTH. OKAY, WE'RE ON A DEADLINE HERE, MAN, SO LET'S GET CRACKING.

"OH, CAROLINA," SAYS A BROKEN VOICE, SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE TREES OF THIS NEW CAROLINA FORESTATION, ARRANGED BY THE EX-PRESIDENT;
THE DRIVER IS SINGING IN A BRAND NEW ORCHARD.
HE'S NOT BEEN WELL SINCE DOOM AND HIS MUTANT ACCOMPLICE TOOK HIM OVER AND RODE HIM TO MALO CITY.
BUT HE TREPANNED HIMSELF WITH A SCREWDRIVER NOT TWO HOURS AGO, AND HE FEELS FINE NOW.
NAHNAH NOT AGAINNN
NOOOOO

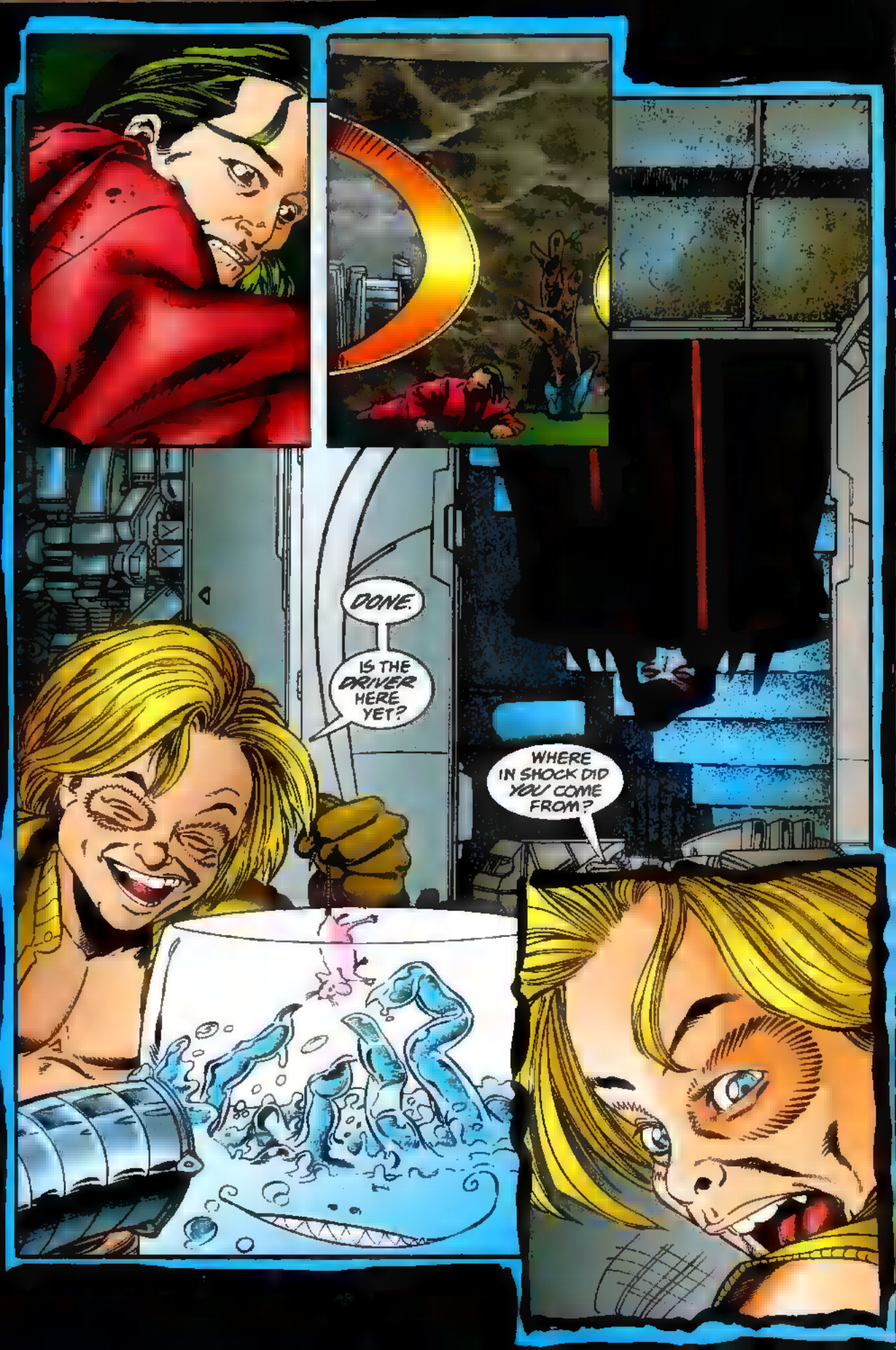
THIS MAN USED TO LEAD THE X-MEN.
NOW, XI'AN CHI XAN IS JUST TIRED; USING HIS MUTANT HEALING ABILITY IN THIS CLINIC, TO EXHAUSTION.
XI'AN?
WHUH? NOT AGAIN.
OH, IT'S YOU, SHAKTI .. HUHH...
YOU'RE JUMPY, XI'AN. ARE YOU SLEEPING?
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO SLEEP, SHAKTI, I HAVE TO ASK YOU TO GO TO FORTUNE HOUSE IN THE DATA DISTRICT.
XI'AN, WE'RE A LITTLE BUSY RIGHT NOW...
I KNOW, THE GRAVEROBBER, YOUR FAMILY, THE CHILDREN...
...AND IF YOU WANT ANY OF IT TO SURVIVE PAST THE WEEKEND, GO TO FORTUNE HOUSE.
THE MAN THERE HAS HAD SOME HOURS, AND SHOULD BE READY FOR YOU NOW...


IT PINCHES IN THE ANKLES A LITTLE.


IT PROCESSES FASTER THAN YOUR OLD CLOTHES. I'VE FILTERED OUT AS MUCH OF THE CHEAPIE LANXIDE ALLOYING AS I CAN TO TOUGHEN IT--
--IT'S GOT EVERYTHING THE OLD ONE DID AND SOME NEW STUFF TO BOOT--
I'D SAY LIVE WITH THE PINCH.
VERY GOOD, BILLY, VERY GOOD.
NOW, ABOUT THE OTHER ORDER I MADE...
GIVE IT ANOTHER HOUR AND THIS VAT'LL BE FULL AND READY TO GO.
I ADMIRE YOUR PROFESSIONALISM, BILLY. SUCH A RARE GIFT THESE DAYS.
HEY, THIS'S THE MOST INTERESTING WORK I'VE HAD SINCE KINDERGARTEN. MY PLEASURE, BOSS.
THERE WILL ALWAYS BE WORK FOR YOU, BILLY ZEDD.
NOW, SINCE I HAVE AN HOUR TO KILL, I THINK I MAY GO VISITING.

THESE ARE THE ROOMS OF MORPHINE SOMERS.
RATS.
WHY DID THE WHITE HOUSE LINE HAVE TO GO DOWN NOW?
THIS IS THE SKIN OF MORPHINE SOMERS, NOW -- CLEAN, WRAPPED IN FINE CLOTHES, A FAR CRY FROM THE GUTTER-DISSIDENT DAYS OF OLD.
SO NOW YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK TO ME? SCABS.
TRANSMISSION BLOCKED BY REQUEST
DOOM INSTALLED THE MUTANT DISSIDENT SOMERS AS CONTROLLER OF HALO CITY.
SOMERS TURNED THAT CONTROL TO HIS OWN ENDS.
HE HAS BEEN BARGAINING WITH THE WHITE HOUSE TO SAVE THAT FINE CLEAN SKIN OF HIS --
-- USING OTHER MUTANTS AS HIS GAMBLING CHIPS.
BOOM
AAHHHK

AAAAAA
LORD, I'VE BEEN SHOT, I'M DYING--
IF I WANTED YOU DEAD, YOU WOULD NOT HAVE HAD TIME TO FEEL THE SHOT.
YOU HAVE BETRAYED MY TRUST IN YOU, MORPHINE SOMERS.
THAT IS AN INHIBITOR SPIKE. YOUR MUTANT TALENT HAS BEEN DISABLED.
YOU WILL LIE STILL AND LISTEN.
DOOM? HOW DID -- HEY, HOW'D YOU GET IN HERE?
HALO CITY WAS BUILT TO MY SPECIFICATIONS, SHOT THROUGH WITH HIDDEN TRANSIT PASSAGES KEYED TO MY BRAIN SIGNATURE.
I CAN REACH YOU ANYTIME I LIKE.
I CHOOSE TO LEAVE YOU ALIVE AND IN HALO CITY. ALL CREATURES DESERVE A CHANCE AT [redacted]
BUT I SHALL [redacted] WATCHING YOU, MORPHINE SOMERS.


DONE.
IS THE DRIVER HERE YET?
WHERE IN SHOCK DID YOU COME FROM?

PERHAPS I SHALL TELL YOU, BEFORE I DEPART; AS HE HERE?
TURNED UP IN THE BASEMENT A [redacted] MINUTES AGO. HOW'D YOU DO IT?
I HAD DEVICES FOR THIS PURPOSE LOCATED IN HALO CITY BY THE BUILDERS. IF ONLY I'D INTERPOLATED IT INTO MY ARMOR...
LEMME AT IT-- I CAN DO THAT--
PERHAPS ANOTHER TIME, BILLY.
FOR NOW, ATTACH FLOATERS TO THE VATS-- WE [redacted] TO LOAD THEM AND THEIR DELIVERY SYSTEM ONTO THE NITROBURN.
FAST WORK, BILLY. I'M IMPRESSED.
DRIVER-- [redacted] ABOUT YOUR APPOINTED TASKS.
PANT- PANT-- WOULDN'T WANTCHA-- PANT- TO GETCHA [redacted] ALL DIRTY. PANT-
GET YOU I'LL GET YOU YOU SCAB YOU PUSLICKER YOU.

ALL UTTERLY TERRIFYING, I'M SURE.
MOVE.
"BORED."
"BOREDBORED BOREDBORED BORED.
"I'M BORED, HEROD.
"WHEN ARE YOU GONNA LET ME DO SOMETHING, HUH? HUH?"

BECOMING A LITTLE UNGLUED, MISTER PRESIDENT?
HHHM... WELL, IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED, I SUPPOSE...
THERE'S SOMETHING COMING.
...YOU WEREN'T TERRIBLY STABLE IN THE FIRST PLACE, YOUR NEURAL STRUCTURE WASN'T THE BEST--
--PROBABLY CHUNKS OF ICE IN YOUR BRAIN, TOO...
...WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THERE'S SOMETHING COMING?

"HEROD.
"I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME.
"YOU HAVE DONE WELL, HEROD. YOUR USE OF NANOTECHNOLOGY IN PARTICULAR WAS FASCINATING.
"AND INSPIRING. FOR I HAVE JUST RELEASED AROUND A TON OF NANOTECH ROBOTS INTO YOUR RED HOUSE.
"THEY HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO DISASSEMBLE EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH, [illegible] IT TO [illegible] ATOMS.
"YOUR [illegible], YOUR STAFF, YOUR [illegible], YOUR BUILDING.
"THE SECOND NANOTECH VAT I PREPARED WILL BE DROPPED ON THE CHICAGO VAULT, THEREBY REMOVING THE LAST OF YOUR FANGS.

"YOUR RED MOUSE IS TURNING TO DUST AND AIR, HEROD."
I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH THE TWO SUBDIVISIONS OF NANOTECH ROBOTS INCLUDED IN THIS DELIVERY--
--ONE TO GENERATE A TEMPORARY DISPLAY SCREEN, SO WE COULD CHAT--
--AND ONE TO BOND INTO YOUR MOLECULAR STRUCTURE AND CHEW INTO YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM, LEAVING YOU IN CONSTANT PAIN FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.
YOU WILL NEVER FORGET ME AGAIN, HEROD.

YOU, I CHOOSE TO LEAVE ALIVE. IT IS CRUELER.
OH, YOU WILL DOUBTLESS BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE PAIN FOR SHORT PERIODS... BUT YOU WILL ALWAYS KNOW IT IS THERE, WAITING.
AS AM I.

WELL, YOU'RE IN A GOOD MOOD.
I'LL ADMIT TO FEELING A LITTLE PLEASED.
THANK YOU FOR COMING HERE, SHAKTI HADDAD -- I APOLOGIZE FOR THE CRYPTIC NATURE OF MY SUMMONS, BUT I PREFER TO REMAIN DEAD TO AMERICA AT THIS TIME.
I HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU.
HALO CITY WAS BUILT TO MY SPECIFICATIONS, COMPLETE WITH A BACK DOOR, SHOULD I HAVE REQUIRED IT.
THIS HIDDEN ROOM WITHIN FORTUNE HOUSE CONTAINS THAT BACK DOOR -- A TELEPORTATION CONDUIT.
IT IS NO MAGIC CARPET, THOUGH, SHAKTI.
IT WORKS ON A STATION-TO-STATION BASIS, TELEPORTING BETWEEN OTHER SUCH PLATFORMS SECRETED ACROSS THE WORLD.
HERE LIE THE TRANSFER CODES FOR THE CONDUIT, WITHOUT WHICH IT IS USELESS.

YOU ARE BY FAR THE WISEST OF THE X-MEN, SHAKTI.
THE YOUNG MUTANTS THAT THIS CITY IS CALLING X-NATION ARE PLACED IN YOUR CARE.
AND SO ARE THESE TRANSFER CODES.
THE CHILDREN ARE MORE THAN YOU KNOW.
THESE ARE CODES-- THESE ARE OUR SECRETS, SHAKTI. KEEP THEM WELL.
NOW I MUST DEPART THIS POISONED COUNTRY. BE SAFE, BOTH OF YOU.
WHERE'RE YOU GOING TO?

"'Do what thou wilt' shall be the whole of the law."
A. Crowley
CONCLUDED